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Depot Town Rag

Volume 14, Number 10 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

100% FREE Rag content

October 1991

- **The shirt off our back**
- **Edifice Complex:**
- Officers elected
- *Priorities set*

. . . and other strictly local stuff

Hallowe'en Hoopla

A three-part party for the kids!

(Family fun at the Freighthouse)

Wednesday, October 30

Amy McMillan, the City's Parks & Rec spark plug, shows great excitement when talking of her plans for this year's Hallowe'en celebration in Depot Town. "It's going to be a three-part event with emphasis on the kids," she notes. "In fact, parents will be able to participate in the street dance *only* with their childrens' approval! You know how embarrassing it can be when Mom and Dad get out there and dance on their own."

- From 5-7pm children from 3 - to 12 years old (with parents) will be admitted for .50 for an evening of games and entertainment in theighthouse. Chaperones, although necessary for admission, are admitted free. Carnival games, a spectacular magic show and prizes will be featured.
- At 7:15, a costume parade will assemble on the Freighthouse dock and wind its way through Depot Town.
- From 7:30 to 8:30 a Street Dance will be held on East Cross Street from Ninde Street to the Railroad tracks — featuring the same 3 - to 12-year olds.

Parents may dance too, but only with permission from the tots!

She's the Princess of Depot Town

. . . and a whole lot more

Katrina's Hair Studio may look like the headquarters for the Miss America Pageant from the display in the tiny shop's window, but strollers and clients along East Cross Street need to look beyond the giant, glitzy trophies in the window to find tiny Katrina, the recipient of all those honors. Katrina is an eight-year-old from Mrs. Smith's second grade class at Kettering School, and she's certainly not the person who's going to cut your hair, whether the popular hair care shop is named after her or not. It's her mom, Kathy, who does the business, but her red-haired daughter is never far from the center of attention and activity

Katrina Suarev won so many trophies and awards in preparation and experience for the 1991 National Conference of the North American Youth Festival that she qualified for the national competitions in June and July. "The contest was held at the Greenleaf Resort in Florida," says Katrina, "and it was my first airplane ride."

In the last year Katrina has received recognition as

- Tiny TV Commercial
- Tiny Sophisticate
- Tiny Sweetheart
- Tiny Miss Great Lakes
- Holiday Model
- Tiny Southeast Michigan

All these accolades have brought eight titles, sixteen trophies, offers and interest from two different Detroit modeling agencies, and hours of combing in mom's styling chair. Katrina was so popular and successful this year that she was asked to be hostess at this year's State Finals.

Does she ever get nervous with all that attention on stage? "Sometimes I think my stomach is going to collapse," she admits, but you'd never know it from her outer confidence and poise. At this very early age, she's a real trouper and shows great presence and dignity. Still, when the spotlight is off her satin, lace and rhinestones, Katrina is just as ready to giggle and play as the next kid on this old block.

Katrina's mom, Kathy, has had her shop in Depot Town for more than two years and is eager to work with anyone who can help her support her daughter's blooming career in the beauty/modeling business.

Kristina Suarev shows her Miss Broadway outfit and trophy in front of her Mom's Depot Town shop.

Fall Fair

at the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market

Saturday 5 October

Edifice Complex:

More : Local history that never happened

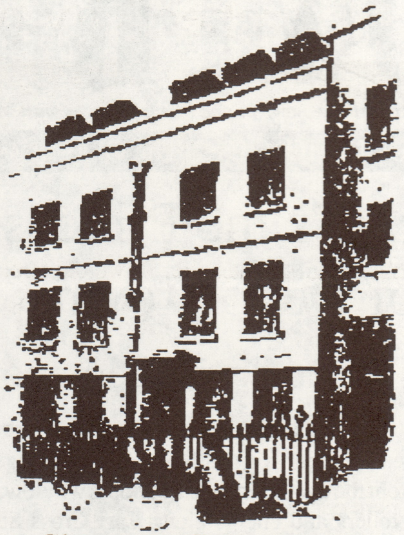
(This special two-page spread only continues the silliness that is relegated to one column during the other eleven publications of the year.)

> "Politicians, ugly buildings, and whores: all get respectable with old age." - John Huston in *Chinatown*

Self-deprecating History

When the current building owners moved into the former warehouses in historic Depot Town to establish the Rainbow Colony of jewelry shops, tropical plant stores and wind chime center of the mid-west, only their insurance agents talked to them about depreciation. Too busy fighting tax increases and City codes, they thought they meant "deprecation," and took it as a compliment.

For many of the new owners, hearing someone speak of the dirt and dust on the clothing they wore while remodeling was the nicest thing they had heard all day. "Where are you from?" strangers were often heard to ask thinking there must be a dirt mine or a mud storm in the area, and local renovators usually just pointed to a huge pile of rubble in a dumpster and mumbled something about falling plaster, broken pipes, or leaky roofs. A year or so later their places were on the home tour - but the owners were too tired to celebrate. They just resorted to self-deprecating humor and cried while they smiled. The rest was history.



Sidewalk Salutations

Historians can never be sure: Was it "salutations" or "solicitations?" Whichever, pedestrians along East Cross Street have always enjoyed a friendly 'hello,' and the tradition continues today. The wrought iron fence (above) now forms the entry to a gift shop in Plymouth. The window frames are available at a local picture frame shop. The door and window hardware can be seen in neighborhing antique emporia. Most of the remaining facade has been covered in a polyester resin which simulates wood grain.

First Liberated Woman?

Ma Bush operated a four-story brothel at her address, but that wasn't what got the City Fathers (and Mothers?) so mad at her. The thing that soured them so was the fact that Ma didn't have a door bell; she had a hole cut above her front door through which she stuck her head on sunny days and followed the daily progress of business on the block with her steely glare.

In the interest of secrecy and privacy, City Council passed an ordinance dictating little one-way peep holes in apartment entrances.

Depot Town images featured at Ann Arbor library

A series of oil paintings featuring amy of the older buildings in Depot Town will be exhibited as part of the Ann Arbor Art Teachers and Alumni Association at the Grand Re-Opening of the Ann Arbor Main Public Library, when it dedicates its new addition and renovation on Sunday,October 27 at 1 pm.

The oils are the work of *Rag* editor, Tom Dodd, and were first shown on Ted Heusel's WAAM radio show on July 3. Local folks called in and said they could recognize the district's landmarks from their descriptions alone, although they may find it more difficult in the Library's new exhibit space.

Most of the works on Depot Town recal the district as it was about twenty years ago and afford handy comparisons to today's sanitized townscape. A painting of the west wall of the Follet House is called "Patchwork," and other titles include "Antique Row," "Central/ Exchange "(nee Sidetrack), "Chew Chew" (Mail Pouch Tobacco billboard in the railroad district), a train speeding past the Masonic Block, and "Studio" (featuring the windows of the editor's own paintin' place at #25 1/2).

The Main Library closed for five weeks, starting September 23, to complete the final phase of the building project and will reopen for dedication on Sunday, October 27 at 1 pm. The new and expanded exhibition space will continue to feature the works of school children of the Ann Arbor Public Schools from time to time.

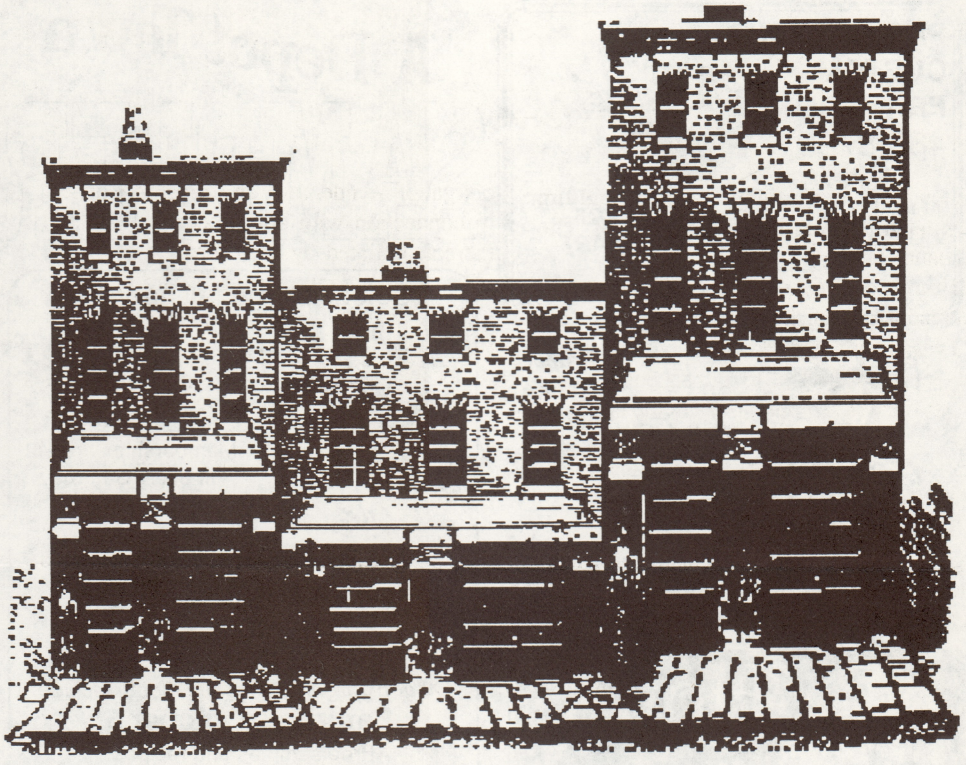
It certainly helped!

When folks who were accustomed to shopping in cement block malls criticized the precarious pitch of some of the historic edifices on the block, most locals would respond with the old sallie, "When are you going to break your hip?" 'Nuf sed?

More optimistic local historians relied on the building's tilt to develop slogans such as, "A new slant on architectural history," and "Leaning Towers of Pizza." They said they had a 'new angle' on things.

This building - though no longer standing - eventually became in-fill for the sluiceway which helped to create Frog Island. The former structure was a popular rooming house where several people who are now happily married took up residence for a few months.

Cheap rents and friendly tenants have been the hallmark of such early high rise living quarters since we got off the boat in New York.



Popular Design Proliferated

Benny Foolet, an early entrepreneur at the depot, was known far and wide for his unique and creative designs in the Commercial Italianate style. "I can build on any site," he was often known to boast, and his elegant designs are found up and down the block. Many of them were still standing when these mezzotint etchings were first scratched.

When his detractors criticized his facades for their monotony, Foolet's rejoinder was, "What do they now? I own the only bank in town!"

Foolet was the founder of many early enterprises in the region, chief among them being an architectural firm which examined the structure of old buildings and took bets on when they would fall down. He died a rich man.

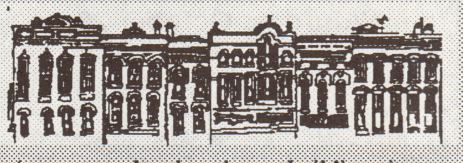
After the verticality of the popular Gothic Revival design, the Italianate Revival style borrowed from the palaces of the Renaissance. Their horizontal banding and lateral rows of stone and shadow caused the observer to look around at more worldly things. Many of them moved to other communities shortly after such a glance toward the horizon.

D.T.A. President's message:

Almost everybody in town knows the symbol of the old caboose down in Depot Town. It's on our signs, our letterhead, and in our advertisements in the local press. Best yet, it's a REAL caboose and it sits right between the buildings on the north side of the block and the Freighthouse. As you pass the intersection of East Cross and Rice Streets, the most popular car in any old train set seems to beckon people in — to park, shop, and even have birthday parties inside.

The caboose is the focus of the block, a mini-museum of the past, and a happy memory of the good old days of steam train travel and transportation. In Depot Town, the much loved caboose has even gained the status of a proper noun and is almost always capitalized: The Old Caboose!

When The Old Caboose came to town on Valentines Day back in 1979, the City building inspectors decided to call this former vehicle



a 'monument' rather than a building, just to avoid some of the legal ramifications which go with such an edifice.

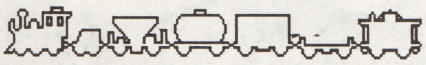
Electric lines connect through underground conduit with the big 'welcome' sign on the west wall of the Follett House, and the tracks have been removed which once connected the rail siding with the main line. Now it's the home of meetings for adults and parties for kids. And it was the neighborhood kids who gave The Old Caboose its last coat of paint several years ago.

When an exterminiator came to check on rumors of ants eating up our favorite landmark, he pointed out that, "You've got bigger problems here than ants," indicating the attention needed to the repair and replacement of many portions of the more than one hundred-year-old wooden structure.

At the annual election meeting in September, Judy Monaghan and Gary McKeever volunteered to head a committee to get the necessary work done to bring the district's smallest historic structure back into good repair. They'll need the assistance of many to do this. Just give the Caboose your own inspection next time you park out back, and then let Judy and Gary know how you can help. Perhaps the easiest way to make contact is by dropping your note in the caboose's mail slot.

The Old Caboose has become such a favorite place in almost everyone's nostalgia that we sometimes see the symbol and not the real thing. Now it's time for all of us to get less theoretical and more real. Won't you get on board with us? -Your prez, Bill French

Depot Town Association, Inc., 19 September 1991



DTA: Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!

Guests: Pam Hinds, representing Amy McMillan, from the City's Parks & Recreation Department; Kristen Scherer, Account Executive, and Jim Stevenson, Advertising Director of The Ypsilanti Press.

Minutes of the August meeting approved and read and published.

Treasurer's report approved and gratefully received. Thanks to retiring Sally Richie for her financial ministrations in the last year. Current balance: $3197. Copious reports of the year's financial activities were distributed for detailed analysis.

Election of officers:

Geri Tillman presented a slate of officers who were elected by acclamation.

President - A. William French, Vice President - Dave Blackmer, Treasurer - Bettie Dodd, Secretary - Tom Dodd. President French thanked the retiring officers and nomination committee, Geri Tillman.

Steve Gross has been meeting with John Gawlas, who is general chair for the **1992 Ypsilanti Heritage Festival.**

Pam Hinds, reported on the City's plans for this year's children's **Hallowe'en Hoopla** (see page one). Ypsilanti Press representatives showed their advertising page for the event. Volunteers are still needed to help with story telling, games and prizes, and other duties at the three-part party.

Carolyn McKeever reported other meetings with the City for new possibilities for a **Winter Jazz Series** in exchange for a summer series of brown bag concerts in the park. Her committee will make a proposal at the October meeting.

First reading of possible **amendments to the DTA Constitution and Bylaws:**

1. Indemnification. Each person who is or was a director or an officer of this corporation shall be indemnified by the corporation to the fullest extent permitted by the corporation laws of the State of Michigan, as they may be in effect from time to time; provided, however, the corporation shall have no obligation to indemnify any director or officer in connection with any proceeding, or part thereof, initiated by such director or officer without authorization of the Board of Directors. This corporation may purchase any insurance on behalf of any such person in any such capacity or arising out of his or her status as such, whether or not the corporation would have power to indemnify such person against such liability under the laws of the State of Michigan.

2. Change title of "Vice President" to "President Elect."

Final reading will take place at the October meeting.

Rag report: Format has returned to six sides with fourteen sponsors.

Judy Monaghan reported that **income from jazz T-shirts** is still coming in with some bills still outstanding.

Paul Fetters reported that many of the **recent City improvements** to public spaces are coming in under budget. Outstanding projects include the Signal Shanty construction, electricity, signs, landscaping and fencing and the pad and enclosure of the north side dumpsters.

Ivan Harner has been appointed to the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority.

The exterminator has **checked for ants in the Caboose** and recommends serious repairs in other areas first. (See President's message)

$1500 has been received from The Ark in partial fulfillment of our contract for the Frog Island Festival. The final amount will be due in February.

Dave Blackmer will follow up with the City about **regular police patrols** as promised by YPD officers two months ago.

1991-1992 DTA goals were suggested, discussed, prioritized, and are listed in this issue.

New or renewing members of The Depot Town Association

James T. Westfall Rochelle Balkam
Gary & Carolyn McKeever
Sidetrack, Inc. Doris Moxley
The Ypsilanti Recycling Project

1991-1992 officers

President	A. William French	- 483-1870
Vice president	Dave Blackmer	- 485-7546
Secretary/editor	Tom Dodd	- 482-6371
Treasurer	Bettie Dodd	- 482-6371

Committee appointments will be announced at the October meeting of the Association.

The Depot Town Association

Cut out and mail your dues to:
DTA, 400 Market Place,
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Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

- O Associate member $10.
- O Business/Property member $25.
- O Sustaining member $100.
- O Please mail *The Rag* or O I'll pick it up.

October 1991

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Depot Town Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 10/17
The Old Caboose

Depot Town
Antique Engine Club 10/24
7:00 p.m. Thursday,
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

1991-1992 district priorities

from questionnaire and meeting discussion

1. Fix up the Caboose.
2. Bring pressure to develop the depot.
   Develop more mini-events
   (i.e.: concerts, street rod shows).
3. Improve west entry to the Freighthouse.
   Finish the Signal Shanty project.
4. More lighting around the Market Plaza.
   Create more family events.
   Finish the dumpster enclosure and pad.
5. Install banners for special events, seasons, sales.
   Create storage for event supplies and fixtures.
6. Initiate more cooperative advertising.
   Make the Freighthouse more viable.
   Standardize business hours.
7. More north side improvements.
   Develop south side parking.
   Create strong business footing for DTA.
   Raise funds for the good of the block.

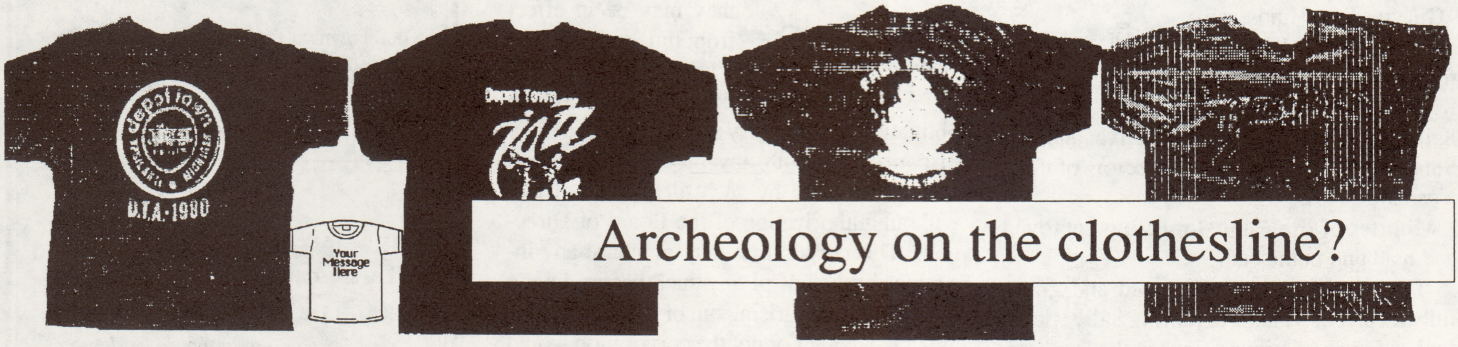
THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
A. William French, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Wash-and-wear culture's T-shirts tell the Depot Town story



Archeology on the clothesline?

The last twenty years of preservation in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town may be best recorded on what was simply the *underwear* of the 19th Century. The prominence of American T-shirts as outerwear should have warned us about Madonna's bra being worn on top, but we were still surprised, weren't we? Long seen as something to be worn *under* a regular shirt, T-shirts have moved to the fashion front and are now suggested as a practical replacement for the dress shirt and tie under a sport or suit coat. In Depot Town, T-shirts and jeans seem to have taken the place of the denim coveralls, ticking-striped coats, and kerchiefs of the earlier railroad yard denizens.

Depot Town's first promotional T-shirt may have been the "Save the Depot" shirt and it's still seen from time to time on men who have been married at least thirty years whose spouses didn't see them leaving the house in time. Some wearers of these shirts may have begun with a T-shirt-shape, but an M-shirt would seem more apropriate today.

Purveyors of the so-called "T" often don't even bother with "small" or "medium" anymore. "L" and "XL" are most common and there are calls for shirts that resemble yesterday's painter's drop cloth. T-shirts are said to keep up with the expanding market, no doubt.

Harold Jones' Boomer Days T-shirt looks just like Jonesey — sitting on the bench in front of Ike's Barbershop with a friend — and when someone joins him on the bench, the shirt design imitates life. "Two old boomers sitting on a park bench" could easily be the icon of Depot Town. May Jonesey's shirt continue for at least another decade on this block — with Jonesey in it!

One of the most noticeable T-shirts on the block this season is the shirt with *nothing* printed on it. The absence of slogan or logotype is a sure attention-getter with every kid on the block asking, "Where did you get that shirt?" It's a rare item. Most local shirts promote local life with color, words, and new or old artwork.

Although once the province of men only, T-shirts are now worn by every sex and age. Sexist wet T-shirt contests may have been the rage at the Yuppie fern bars in suburbia, but down in Depot Town the only wet T-shirts were wet with perspiration from scraping, sanding and painting. And the best paint rags were last year's T-shirts -- now that we're old enough to have used up all of those super-absorbent cloth diapers.

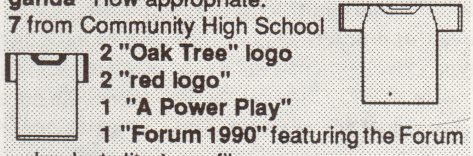
Commercial shirts have included cotton blends from Miller's Ice Cream, Aubree's Saloon, Sidetrack, and the annual Heritage Festival. Some of the first T-shirts on Cross Street came from the back room of the old Follett Hotel, where the Rainbow Silkscreen company held forth until about 1980. Probably the greatest number of total shirt designs came from Elmo's Supershirts in Ann Arbor.

Jazz T-shirts seem ti predominate on this block. Among the "Save the Whales" T-shirt crowd, it seems jazz concerts in the Freighthouse, on Frog Island or in the street were the most popular T-shirt cause in this locale during the last fifteen years. While T-shirters from towns with less history wear their "Sidetrack Tap" from the fictive Lake Woebegon, Ypsi kids can wear the real thing with authenticity and confidence.

Creative entrepreneurs are certainly wondering what's next in the area of personal garment promotions. Headbands didn't eclipse T-shirts. Baseball caps tried. Socks and suspenders failed. Ties may never make a come-back — at least not in this neighborhood. Maybe it'll take the form of sunglasses with slogans printed on them? Naaaah!

Inventory of a T-shirt drawer:

2 "HICE," Highly Interactive Computing Environments - from a nerd convention in Phoenix, Arizona.
1 "Artrain 1986"
1 "Artrain 1987," both from the biggest painting Carolyn and I ever worked on - four cars and a caboose!
1 "Banana Republic Minister of Propaganda" How appropriate.
7 from Community High School



2 "Oak Tree" logo
2 "red logo"
1 "A Power Play"
1 "Forum 1990" featuring the Forum leader/editor's profile.
1 "Pinocchio 1988"
1 "Depot Town Antique Engine Club," the neighborhood's only true uniform when accompanied by a baseball cap.
1 "Elmo's Turkey Trot 1987," declaring that fit turkeys last longer.
1 "Frog Island 1983"
1 "Frog Island 1988" What happened to all the others? Are they paint rags already?
1 "I love everybody and you're next" . . . vanity shirt from Elmo's special edition.
1 "Mercury Paints," with most of the neighborhood colors splattered somewhere on the front/reachable panels.
1 "Michigan Sesquicentennial 1987"
1 "Miller's Ice Cream Parlor"
1 "Raw Bits" from Lake Woebegon fakery.
1 "Rocket 88's," from a biker bar in the Arizona desert. More fun than the computer convention.
1 "Gut Smackers" gag shirt.
1 "USSR/CCCP," poor quality cotton, great communist logo. The only one that's not XL.
1 "Welcome Home" . . . a true collector's item from the caboose's arrival in Depot Town.
1 "When in charge ponder . . ." gift from City Councilmember's mom with sage advice.

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Help us celebrate Co-op Month
Memberships are 1/2 off every Saturday October!
In addition, on each Saturday in October, you can become a member of the Ypsilanti Food Co-op at a 50% savings.

Other highlights during the month include:

Saturday, October 5:
Free samples and recipes for breads, biscuits, and whole grain goodies from 7 am to 3 pm at the Farmers' Market Fall Fair.

Saturday, October 12:
Come in and nibble on some treats and take home a recipe for Halloween sweets you can feel good about at this month's Cooking Encounters. If you're a new Co-op member, come to an Orientation today.

Saturday, October 19:
Cider pressing demonstration and cider sampling at noon. Also see the videotape "The Cooperative Story" (10 min.).

Saturday, October 26:
See the videotape "Cooperatives working For All of Us" (10 min.)

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